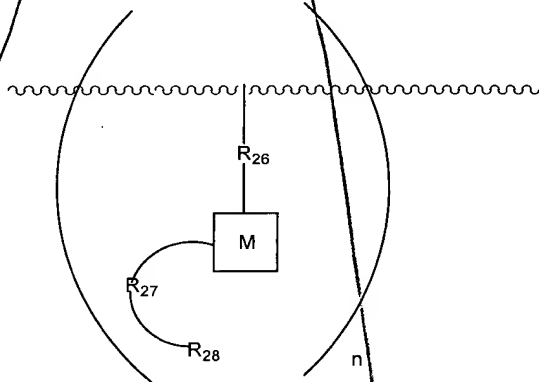


Please amend the following claims:

13. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claim 12 having the formula comprising:



wherein

~~~~~ is a polymer;

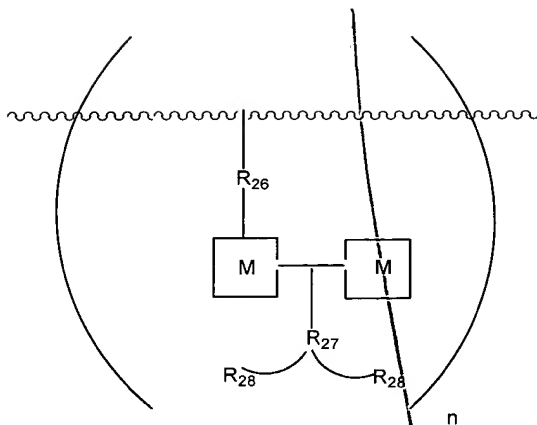
M is a chelator comprising a paramagnetic metal ion;

R<sub>26</sub> and R<sub>27</sub> are linker groups;

R<sub>28</sub> is a blocking moiety; and,

n is an integer.

14. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claim 12 having the formula comprising:



wherein

~~~~~ is a polymer;

M is a chelator comprising a paramagnetic metal ion;

R₂₆ and R₂₇ are linker groups;

R₂₈ is a blocking moiety; and

n is an integer.

15. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claims 12, 13, or 14 wherein said paramagnetic metal ion is selected from the group comprising gadolinium III (Gd³⁺ or Gd(III)), iron III (Fe³⁺ or Fe(III)), manganese II (Mn²⁺ or Mn(II)), dysprosium (Dy³⁺ or Dy(III)), or chromium (Cr³⁺ or Cr(III)).

16. An MRI agent according to claim 15 where said paramagnetic ion is Gd(III).

17. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claims 12, 13 or 14 wherein said linker groups are alkyl groups.

18. An MRI agent according to claim 17 wherein said alkyl groups are substituted alkyl groups.

B3 19. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claims 12, 13 or 14 wherein said linker groups are aryl groups.

20. An MRI agent according to claims 19 wherein said aryl groups are substituted aryl groups.

21. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claims 12, 13 or 14 wherein at least one of said linker groups are selected from the group comprising p-aminobenzyl, methyl, ethyl, propyl, butyl, pentyl, hexyl, propionic acid, aminobutyl, p-alkyl phenols, and 4-alkylimidazole.

B4 22. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claims 12, 13 or 14 wherein said blocking moiety is a peptide.

23. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claim 22 wherein said peptide binds to a metalloproteinase.

B5 25. (Amended) An MRI agent according to claims 12, [2]13, or [3]14 wherein said polymer is selected from the group comprising functionalized dextrans, styrene polymers, polyethylene, polyanionic polymers, polycationic polymers, and mixed polymers.

26. An MRI agent according to claim 25 wherein said polycation is polylysine.